United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General deplores helicopter incident in which Australian officer in United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia is wounded; calls on Cambodian parties to scrupulously observe Paris Accords and preserve conditions for peace plan.

- Secretary-General chairs meeting in Geneva with senior executives of Non-Governmental Organizations concerned with emergency relief.

- Referendum for whites in South Africa described as "an unfortunate denouement in the process of political change" by Chairman of Special Committee against Apartheid.

- Secretary-General stresses need for cooperation between the United Nations and Organization of African Unity in seeking solutions to Africa's problems, in a message delivered at meeting of Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa.

- Iraq proposes "fair balance" between progress achieved so far on destruction of Iraqi weapons and Security Council's position on sanctions with a view to lifting them.

- Only Powers with technology and mastery over its applications were benefiting fully from use of outer space, Mexico's representative tells Subcommittee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today through Spokesman François Giuliani that he had learned with "profound concern" of an incident earlier today in which an Australian officer with the United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) was wounded when unknown elements fired on a United Nations helicopter en route to Batambang.

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The Secretary-General called on all parties to the Paris accords on Cambodia, signed last October, to scrupulously observe those agreements and to preserve conditions in the country conducive to the successful implementation of the peace plan.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali has asked the Senior Military Liaison Officer of UNAMIC, Brigadier-General Michel Loridon, to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident and to report back to him as soon as possible.

The Spokesman told correspondents that the wounded officer was Lieutenant Colonel Russel Stuart, Commander of the Australian contingent. He was treated in a hospital in Bangkok and was now in "satisfactory condition". The incident took place when three or four shots were fired at a UNAMIC helicopter carrying three liaison officers on a reconnaissance mission of proposed sites for containment of armed factions, as called for in the peace plan, the Spokesman said.

In a related development, Security Council held consultations today concerning a draft text on the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The Council is expected to take action on the draft resolution later this week.

The General Assembly has already approved $200 million for the start-up of the operation which is estimated to cost some $2 billion.

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The Secretary-General today chaired a meeting at the Palais des Nations in Geneva with senior executives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) concerned with emergency relief.

During the meeting, Mr. Boutros-Ghali reviewed with participants NGO cooperation with the United Nations on humanitarian issues and introduced the recently-appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, who will serve as Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Secretary-General emphasized the importance of close cooperation in the humanitarian emergency sector with NGOs and with regional organizations in all fields of United Nations endeavours. He also underlined his commitment to enhancing United Nations effectiveness in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

NGO participants and Under-Secretary-General Eliasson agreed that the United Nations should act as a trigger mechanism to alert international attention and serve as a catalyst to generate rapid response to the outbreak of emergencies. They agreed that political support by the United Nations was crucial in insuring the successful provision of relief. Participants also emphasized the need for timely early warning capacities and for greater exchange of information to that end. Specific emergency situations were addressed, particularly related to the situation in the Horn of Africa.

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The Secretary-General was scheduled to chair a meeting of United Nations Agencies and Programmes concerned with emergency relief this afternoon.

He was to meet this evening with a special envoy of Libyan President Muammar el-Qaddafi, Mr. Yousef Debri.

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The referendum for whites in South Africa on 17 March, which President F.W. de Klerk has called to test white support for the process of reform, was "an unfortunate denouement in the process of political change" in that country, the Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid, Ibrahim A. Gambari (Nigeria), said in a statement issued today. "It proves once again that the process is not irreversible, an assessment which the Special Committee has made repeatedly in the past."

He warned that if the referendum should fail, the consequences inside and outside South Africa would be profoundly disastrous. "All should be keenly aware that a return to the regressive and repressive apartheid policies of the past could bring about unprecedented violence and a drastic isolation of South Africa," he stressed.

The Special Committee believed, he went on, that the process of negotiating the eradication of apartheid and of adopting a new constitution must have the confidence of all South Africans. It was imperative, therefore, that such a process advance without delays and that all South Africans decide democratically on a new constitution.

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The Secretary-General yesterday stressed the need for cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in seeking solutions to Africa's problems in a message to the fifty-fifth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), meeting in Addis Ababa this week.

The Secretary-General said in his message, delivered by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, James O.C. Jonah, that the current political conflicts in Africa underscored the need for close cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU in the search for solutions to the problems.

He said the situation in Somalia had placed renewed emphasis on Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which deals with regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security. The joint meetings in New York this month between the United Nations, the OAU and other regional organizations that had laid the ground for a future cease-fire arrangement in Mogadiscio, would help establish a pattern for future cooperation and the means by which the United Nations could help enhance the

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role of regional organizations in peace-keeping and peace-making efforts.

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Iraq has proposed that "a fair balance" be drawn between progress achieved so far on the destruction of Iraqi weapons and the Security Council's position on the sanctions with a view to lifting them.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 24 February, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussein reaffirmed Iraq's willingness to cooperate and deal constructively with inspection missions sent out by the Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament. He proposed that Iraqi experts be invited to present the information required from Iraq on its weapons of mass destruction and to respond to any questions that might be raised by the Special Commission. He also offered to provide, upon specific request, any available evidence relating to Iraq's declarations and to discuss the scope of destruction proposed by the Special Commission.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister stated that "Iraq does not reject the plans for ongoing monitoring and verification". He went on to say that "Iraq can deal with the Security Council and the Special Commission on the basis of respect for sovereignty and of refraining from methods of provocation and infringement upon Iraq's industrial capabilities" which, he said, will be devoted to peaceful purposes or to military purposes not prohibited by the Security Council.

The most recent mission to Iraq visited the country from 21 to 24 February and was headed by Rolf Ekeus, Chairman of the Special Commission. (S/23636)

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Only the Powers which possessed the technology and had mastery over its applications were benefiting fully from the use of outer space, the representative of Mexico told the Subcommittee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, yesterday. That situation served to widen the economic gap between developed and developing countries, but the Subcommittee could help prevent a North-South confrontation.

Statements in the Subcommittee's general debate, which began yesterday morning, focused on the establishment of national space agencies, international agreements for space cooperation, the problem of space debris and principles concerning nuclear power sources.

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